

## Chapter 28

I ran like crazy.

I simply had to find him, and I had no idea where to look first.

I checked his study; I checked his room. But by the proximity of his scent, I knew he wasn't anywhere in the house. I wanted to turn around and slap Lukas continually in his stupidly handsome face. But I kept running.

One, because I knew he was sort of right, and two, I felt guilty. Even though I didn't return the kiss and I had no part in this imprinting thing, I couldn't hide the simple fact that I liked Lukas. I freaking liked him while I had a mate. And though now I know what and who I want, the fact still remains and it killed me.

I'll tell Maxim everything. I'll tell him everything from the day Lukas picked me up to this very morning with the phone call. But to do that, I had to find him.

I dashed through the woods at inhuman speed, allowing my wolf forward while still remaining in human form. I needed her sense of smell even more now, and she was really helping with making this mission possible.

I swerved around corners and trees. I hopped over logs and I stomped into mud puddles. All this led me to a certain spot that has now become important to me, and since Maxim chose to come here, I could assume it was special to him too.

It was the area where we shared our first kiss moments ago. He sat with his back and head against the trunk with his eyes closed.

I carefully and slowly approached. He knew I was here, because I felt our wolves connect. Still, he didn't move or make a move to open his eyes.

"When?" he suddenly asked, and I had to do a double take to figure out what he meant.

My throat suddenly felt dry and I inched a bit closer to him. "Ye-yesterday," I said with a gulp.

I watched his eyebrows shoot up before he chuckled humourlessly, and this was when he finally looked at me.

"So, is this like a test trial for you or something? You tried him and today you're trying me?" he asked, and I had to suppress my offence and remind myself that he was hurt.

I didn't like how he made it seem as if I was using both of them and trying to figure out who I wanted to be with. I had been struggling from the minute I found out he's my mate, because my heart wanted to be with him when all odds were pushing me with Lukas. It was barely my fault.

"That's not what it's like," I whispered, holding down my head.

"Then tell me, Melissa. What is it like?" His tone was becoming hurtful, but I tried my best to keep a hold on it.

"He kissed me, okay? I didn't kiss him back. I didn't even like it! One minute I was in the kitchen, then he cornered me and kissed me. I had my eyes open the entire time. My body was stiff and it was forced on me." I rambled everything out, and he stared at me for a while with his face giving nothing away.

He then moved and stood up, and I inclined my head to meet his eyes.

"Why didn't you lead with that?" he simply asked. I couldn't help the relief I felt that he wasn't mad anymore. But after hearing him ask and seeing how calm it made him, I really should have just led with that fact.

Nonetheless, I shrugged. "I was so busy trying to find you that I didn't get a chance to gather my thoughts," I

admitted, and he nodded slowly.

"So, was he not a good kisser or...?"

"Maxim!" I exclaimed, staring at him in disbelief. "This is not a joking matter."

He chuckled lightly. "Oh, I know." He pulled me to his chest, and I felt at home. "I'm not mad at you anymore. My brother will not see my jolly side though."

"What are you gonna do?" I asked in slight anxiety. From what I've heard, Maxim and Lukas have never fought before I got here. Yes, maybe as kids. But I showed up and suddenly every other week they're at each other's throats.

I hated that I did this to them, even though it wasn't intentional. And the worst part was, I didn't want to choose a side.

Something Fiona said came rushing back at that very thought. 'It's okay to love them both, you know?' she had said. I shivered at the thought. I mean, of course I love Lukas. He has become such a good friend to me. I wouldn't want to lose that. And Maxim, he's my soulmate. It was bold of me to declare that I loved him so early, but I do.

I want to share his life; I want to bear his kids. I want to wake up everyday and see his face. Why can't it just go like that? Why did Lukas have to fall for me too?

"And he had the gall to imprint on you," Maxim growled, dragging me from my thoughts. "I'm gonna kill him."

I pulled back just enough so that I was facing him. "Maxim, you can't kill him. He's your brother."

"My brother who betrayed me. From the second he knew that you were my mate, why didn't he just leave you alone? He was selfish, impulsive and arrogant. Then he kisses you and imprints on you! I'm gonna kill him."

"You can't kill him for imprinting on me. His wolf did that, not him."

"Well, technically, it is him. Just the wolf side of him," he pointed out.

"Yes, the wolf side which only knows about instincts and stuff. Remember that betrayal, love and trust is all in our human side. He wouldn't have known that his wolf would imprint on me." It sounded as if I was taking his side, contrary to my earlier thought. But I was only trying to soothe the battle grounds here.

I no longer wanted them to fight, especially for me. I'm not worth it. I'm not worth everything they built together. Their brotherhood, this wonderful pack, their empire-it was all worth more than my hand.

"Give me one good reason why I shouldn't go to his office right now and snap his neck?" Maxim asked. For a second I thought he was joking, but as I analysed his face longer, I couldn't tell.

And then I remembered. If Alpha males are not anything, they are territorial.

I gulped as a thought came to mind, but I feared to let it out.

Still, I stared him straight in the eyes and let my words flow. "Because I am admitting that even though it was small and my heart is yours and only yours, there is a small possibility that I shared some of Lukas's feelings."

I waited for the bomb to drop, but there was none. In fact, his face remained stoic.

"I said give me a good reason," he simply said. My jaw dropped.

"Um, did you not hear what I said?" I laughed awkwardly. "I might've-no I did like Lukas. Your brother, you know? Tall, grey eyes. Broad chest."

"I know who my brother is," he pointed out with an eye roll.

I stared at him, dumfounded. "And you aren't mad?"

"It was quite obvious, Melissa. Remember that I watched you both for two weeks. I saw the signs."

Even with his explanation, I only grew more confused. "And this is okay, why?"

"Oh no it's not okay." He sounded serious. "But you're human too. I spent countless nights talking myself into understanding. That didn't stop the jealousy, of course, but I had to live with it."

I took it all in silently. I couldn't understand him. He knew all along that I liked Lukas and convinced himself that it was a normal human thing to catch feelings? I mean, it's true, but I didn't exactly like the idea that my mate was okay with me liking someone else.

"You seem upset," he pointed out as he held my chin and tilted my head up. I met his stormy eyes as he questioned me silently.

I sighed, realising how foolish I was being. "Just, please don't kill your brother. It would mean a lot to me if he stays alive. And we both know he wouldn't go down without a fight and you could get hurt too."

I knew he wasn't going to actually kill his brother, no matter how serious he seemed. But I knew he would've fought him, and that's what I was trying to avoid.

"I can't make any promises, but I'll try," he finally concluded. I decided to take the win. With Maxim, I couldn't be closer than that.

He slowly placed a kiss on my forehead, and it did wonders to my stomach as I purred at the touch of his lips. I felt at peace. I felt happy. And it was all because of him.

"Thank you for not kissing back Lukas," he mumbled against my forehead. I chuckled as I wrapped my arms around his toned body.

"I promise if he does it again, I will run this time."

He chuckled at my evident joke, which I appreciated.

"Now, let's go make that tea of yours. It's getting late," he said, wrapping his arm around my waist. I smiled contently as we walked through the woods.

It was then that I recognized a cycle. When I was good with Lukas, I wasn't good with Maxim. And when Maxim and I are okay, Lukas and I are not.

Will it always be like this? Does choosing one brother put me in malice with the other. I sighed at the thought and prayed to the moon that I was wrong. The last thing I wanted was to live in a house where I was forced to be a stranger with one of the Dalton brothers.

And at this point, that brother seemed like Lukas.

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The waves crashed against the coast in a loud, majestic rhythm. I walked slowly against the warm sand as my toes sank halfway down.

I hummed at the song of the ocean and allowed the wind to soothe me with its cool, feathery touch.

Above me, the moon shone in all its glory, but it was unnaturally close. It sat over the horizon of the ocean, and it seemed as if I should just walk over to it, I'd be touching the moon. Still, its odd proximity didn't phase me one bit.

I was surprisingly, yet again, as calm as a lamb.

I stared at the beauty of the moon as my white dress swayed in the wind. I smiled at it, raising my arm so my fingers would get lost in its face. I had no idea where I was, or how I got here, but it was the best feeling of my life.

I continued walking along the shoreline where I moved around some coconut trees. I noticed that I was on an island, and on the other side sat the sun. It was massive and orange, just like it looks in the daytime, except now, it was oddly close just like the moon.

But what was even more strange, was the fact that I felt drawn to it, as if it was calling to me. Wasn't I supposed to be drawn to the moon? I am a wolf, of course. But the more I tried to resist it, the more I kept moving towards the sun.

"Melissa." A soft, soothing voice called from behind me. I spun on my heels, glad that I was broken from my trance.

But as I beheld the woman in front of me, all I wanted to do was fall on my knees before her, and I think I knew why.

Her eyes were blue like mine, but they looked more like the ocean with the moonlight sparking from its surface.

Her hair was long and platinum blonde, reaching all the way down to the back of her knees in long, luxurious curls. It was adorned in silver diamonds that sparkled in the moonlight, and she was the epitome of beauty. She wasn't old either, not like I imagined. Her arms were covered in vine-like silky cloth that met her bodice and flowed down her form in a beautiful dress.

And her smile. Gosh it surely had me. Even though I had never met her, I felt safe. I felt connected. It was wonderful.

"I see you've finally made it," she said calmly, taking a step closer.

"M-m-made it where?" I asked. I still wasn't afraid, but my tongue was heavy.

"To me, of course." She chuckled a bit with her eyes sparking even more. "Luckily I found you before you got trapped by the sun. He wants you too, you know?" she asked, and I gulped.

"Wh-who wants me?"

"The sun dragon, of course. But listen, Melissa, you must resist him. He just wants the moon shard." She spoke so casually as if we were old friends discussing coffee. I glanced over my shoulder at the sun again, remembering how it was pulling me.

"The... the sun dragon?"

"Yes."

I gulped again as I met her ocean eyes. "So, you are..."

I had dreamt of this moment as a child. Every wolf had on the night of their first lesson of the moon goddess and all her goodness and power. But now, seeing that it was actually happening, it felt unreal.

She smiled a knowing smile with a single nod before confirming my crazy thoughts. "Yes, Melissa. I am the moon goddess."

As she said this, I was instantaneously plunged into darkness, and it felt like I was falling until I was suddenly in my room again, falling onto my bed sheets.

I gasped for air as my chest heaved up and down, and I peered around my bedroom in utter shock. That wasn't a nightmare. Far from it. But my dream had surely changed.



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